IF YOU DON'T CHOOSE SOME-ONE, WE'LL ALL DIE!
MURMUR
THERE'S GOING TO BE A DEATH REGARD-LESS!
SHAKE
SHAKE
KAZU-NARI!
KAZU-NARI-KUN!
I CAN'T CHOOSE SOMEONE!
WHOEVER I NAME WILL BE KILLED!
HURK
KING'S GAME
ORIGIN

NOW, NOW, EVERYONE PLEASE CALM DOWN.
WE'VE GOT 23 HOURS LEFT.
NO SENSE IN NAMING SOMEONE AND GIVING THIS GUY HIS TARGET EARLY.
IT'D BE BEST TO PUT IT OFF TIL THE LAST MINUTE.
DOU-JIMA-SAN!
THERE'RE A LOT OF REPORT-ERS OUT-SIDE ASKING TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
SLAM
DAMNIT, I TOLD THEM TO STAY OUT OF THE VILLAGE...
KAZU-NARI-KUN, COME WITH ME.
WAVER
MURMUR
MURMUR

STORY BY NOBUAKI KANAZAWA
ART BY J-TA YAMADA

CHAPTER 7

KING'S GAME ORIGIN

NO NEED TO GO IT ALONE
SORRY WE DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU.
YOU'VE DONE SO MUCH ALREADY.
KAZU-NARI...
WHO WILL YOU CHOOSE?
WHO WILL YOU MURDER?
BA-DUM
DROOL

MORNING ALREADY...
KAZU-NARI...
ARE YOU UP?

GRAND-MA
WHAT'M I SUP-POSED TO DO?
I CAN'T NAME ONE OF THE VILLAGERS KNOWING IT'LL PROB-ABLY GET THEM KILLED...
BREAK-FAST IS READY.
COME ON DOWN.
トン トン トン
TUP TUP TUP

JUST EAT!
PAT
GRAND-MA.. SORRY..
I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF AN AP-PETITE.
GRAND-MA...
TIMES LIKE THIS, YOU NEED TO EAT TO KEEP YOUR STRENGTH UP, EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO FORCE IT DOWN.
CLACK

CHOMP
TH-THANKS
I MADE YOUR FAVOR-ITE MINI-OM-ELETTES.
SWEET OM-ELETTS
GRAND-MA'S MADE THESE FOR ME AS A TREAT EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE...
MUNCH
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
FUUU
FUUU
SLURP

KAZU-
NARI...
GRANDMA, THAT WAS DELICIOUS. THANK YOU.
I'M FIN-
ISHED.
IT MUST'VE BEEN!
YOU EVEN ASKED FOR SEC-
ONDS! I'M GLAD.
HMM? WHAT?

YOU CAN PICK ME.
GRAND-MA, WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
I SAID, "YOU CAN PICK ME."
WHA--
KLUMP

I MOST CER-TAINLY CAN NOT!
YOU MIGHT BE KILLED!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHY IT SHOULD BE A RELATIVE, LIKE ME.
IF YOU PICKED SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY, IT'LL JUST MAKE THINGS HARDER ON YOU
ESPECIALLY IF THEY DIE.
BUT--
BUT...

YOUR FATHER WAS UP INTO THE WEE HOURS TALKING WITH THE ELDER...
...TRYING TO THINK IF THERE WAS ANY WAY HE COULD SHOULDER YOUR BURDEN INSTEAD
I FEEL THE SAME WAY. I WISH IT WAS ON MY HEAD.
I'M 67, KAZUNARI. I'VE LIVED A LONG, FULL LIFE.
GRAND-MA...
AND YOUR GRANDFA-THER'S BEEN WAITING FOR ME UP IN HEAVEN FOR SOME TIME NOW.

DON'T SAY ANYTHING MORE.
THERE'S NO NEED
SHHAA
SCRUB
SCRUB

RATTLE
ガラ・・
THEY'RE OUT GUARDING ALL THE VILLAGERS...
AND MONITORING THEM.

I'LL GO TO THE TOWN HALL FOR NOW...
MICHIKO?
オイデ
オイデ
C'MERE
オイデ
C'MERE

TUG
WHAT'S UP, MICHI--
--KOAH!
KAZU-NARI, IN HERE.
WHAT?
I GOT SOME-THING I NEED TO ASK YOU.

WHO'RE YOU PLAN-NING TO CHOOSE?
LIKE YOU DON'T KNOW.
WHAT IS IT?
IF THE COPS CAN'T CATCH THE KING TODAY, YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO PICK SOME-ONE.
NNH--!

I...I...
I CAN'T DO THAT!
IF THE PERSON I SELECT REALLY DOES DIE...
MY GRAND-MA JUST TOLD ME TO CHOOSE HER!
AS IF I EVER COULD!

WE'VE LIVED WITH HER MY WHOLE LIFE!
AND I'M JUST AS CLOSE WITH ALL THE VILLAGERS!

BUT IF YOU DON'T PICK SOMEONE, WE COULD ALL DIE.
WOULDN'T THAT BE A LOT WORSE?
GHK!
NAT-SUKO, YUUJI, RYUUJI, AND MICHIKO ARE ALL MY CLASS-MATES.
KAZUYA AND RYUU-JI'S SISTER SUZUKO ARE STILL IN GRADE SCHOOL.
SHUU-HEI-SAN AND SANAE-SAN ARE IN THEIR 20S-- TOO YOUNG.
KYUU-ZOU-SAN'S THE OLDEST PERSON, BUT...
HE'S THE VILLAGE LEADER AND RYUUJI'S GRAND-FATHER.
I...I KNOW...!
BUT--

YOUR VOICE...
...SOUNDS HOARSE...
...KA-ZU-NARI.
I...
I...
STOP IT, AGE DOESN'T MATTER!
I CAN'T PICK ANYONE!
OF COURSE IT IS, WHO WOULDN'T BE FREAKING OUT IF THEY HAD TO--
?!
SHFF

HERE...
LET ME MAKE IT ALL BETTER.

KISS
KISS
MMN--
MMN--
WHAT'RE YOU DOING, MICHIKO?!
T-THE HELL?!
GASP
LICK
MAKING OUT WITH YOU, DUH!

IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT MY DAD, DON'T BE.
HE STUMBLED IN THIS MORNING AND DRANK HIMSELF TO SLEEP.
HE WON'T BE UP TIL TONIGHT.
WHY'D YOU START.. KISSING ME ALL OF A SUDDEN?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!
WIPE
HOW WAS IT?
I KNOW YOU AND NATSUKO HAVEN'T GONE THAT FAR YET.
SMIRK
POKE

I KNOW NATSUKO'S POPULAR AT SCHOOL 'CUZ SHE'S ALL CUTESY...
...BUT I'VE GOT A GOOD REPUTA-TION TOO.
I MAY BE A BRAT, BUT I KNOW I'M PLENTY HOT.

MICHI-KO...
AWW, DON'T LOOK SO SERI-OUS.

WHAT ELSE?
SO YOU WON'T CHOOSE ME TO GET MY HEAD CHOPPED OFF!
THAT KISS WAS JUST AN ADVANCE PAY-MENT.
PAY-MENT? FOR WHAT?!
I FIGURED YOU'D SAY THAT.
OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, I WOULDN'T EVEN CON-SIDER NAMING YOU!

BUT THERE'S NO WAY TO BE SURE.
YOU CAN NEVER COMPLETELY TRUST OTHER PEOPLE.
OBVIOUSLY YOU WOULDN'T SELECT YOUR DEAR NATSUKO
OR YOUR BEST PAL YUUJI...
POOR RECOUPERATING RYUUJI, LITTLE KAZUYA OR SUZUKO... THEY'RE ALL OUT.
I FIGURED I JUST NEEDED TO IMPROVE MY RANKING A LITTLE.

YOU LITTLE--
SO YOU ONLY CARE ABOUT SAVING YOURSELF, IS THAT IT?!
NO, OF COURSE NOT.
BUT IS IT REALLY SO STRANGE TO PRIORITIZE YOUR OWN LIFE?
UH... WELL...
YOU'RE OVERTHINKING THIS, KAZUNARI.
NOT PICKING ANYONE ISN'T AN OPTION, SO YOU MAY AS WELL PICK SOMEONE YOU DON'T LIKE.
THAT, OR ONE OF THE SENIORS.

AND WHAT IF THEY ACTUALLY DIE?
THEN THE POLICE WILL BE TO BLAME.
IT'LL MEAN THEY FAILED TO DO THEIR JOBS AND PROTECT THEM.
IF THE COPS CAN'T PREVENT ANOTHER MURDER EVEN WITH ALL THEM SWARMING AROUND LIKE THIS, THEN THEY'RE USE-LESS.

WHO KNOWS HOW, THOUGH...
TAE... SAN!
THE KING KILLED TAE-SAN RIGHT IN FRONT OF DOUJI-MA-SAN...
AND THAT'S WHY I'M DOING WHAT I'M DOING.

C'MON, KAZU-NARI...
I KNOW YOU'RE HEAD OVER HEELS FOR NAT-SUKO, BUT DATING YOUR COUSIN COMES WITH A LOT OF ISSUES
ESPE-CIALLY IN OUR VIL-LAGE.

HUH...
ONE OF THESE DAYS THEY'RE JUST GONNA HAVE TO ACCEPT IT, AND WE'LL BE FINE!
TURN
YEAH, I KNOW! SO WHAT?!
..IF YOUR HEART BE-LONGS TO NATSUKO.
HONESTLY, I DON'T REALLY CARE...
SMILE

FLAP
LIKE I SAID, UPFRONT PAYMENT.
DOESN'T MATTER TO ME IF THERE'S NO EMOTION INVOLVED.